

Testimony to the House Energy and Technology Committee; January 23 2008  
Presented by the Michigan Student Sustainability Coalition

I am a representative of the Michigan Student Sustainability Coalition (the MSSC), I am here before you, distinguished house members of the Energy and Technology Committee, to discuss with you the MSSC position on the packet of energy related bills on your table today. I refer to HB 5525, 5548, and 5549.

The MSSC is an organization of student groups working to improve sustainability on college campuses and in high schools all across Michigan. We have over 400 active student members coming from an array of backgrounds. Over the years we have worked closely with groups like the Michigan Environmental Council, the Sierra Club, and more. We sit here before you not as kids, students, environmentalists, scientists, or politicians; we are the collective voice of thousands of MI citizens and voters. We are not simply the future of MI, we are not simply “the nation’s greatest resource” as many politicians have put in the past, we, like you, *are* Michigan and we implore you to take our petition to heart.

It is our understanding that soon the committee will be deciding on the final drafts of the aforementioned bills which will be sent to the house for a vote. It is for this reason we are here today. There is no doubt within the MSSC that these pieces of legislation are designed to begin to turn the tide in our State’s, Nation’s, and world’s battle against global climate change. Scientists, politicians, and citizens alike, agree that climate change is real and that the anthropogenic acceleration of these phenomena is a leading cause. The remaining questions relate to how we are going to begin to minimize human impacts on our environment to lessen the effects of climate change. In order to make significant contribution to this fight our government needs to adopt strong and unprecedented policies very soon. The pieces of legislation before you are a “start”, but are they a strong start?

Section 7 of HB 5525 outlines an energy efficiency program, whereby electrical utility providers are to annually incrementally ramp up their operation’s energy savings/efficiency to 1% as of 2012 and 1% every year after. This seems a start; however it is the MSSC’s position that we can extend our efficiency standards even more to reach 2% by the year 2015. If they can reach 1% in four years, surely they can reach 2% in eight years; we feel that would be a good strong start for MI efficiency programs. In November of 2007 the Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, a Washington based organization published a study on the economic effects of possible energy efficiency legislation in MI. (Introduce findings of “The Economic Benefits of an Efficiency-Led Clean Energy Strategy to Meet Growing Electricity Needs in Michigan”)

Section 5 of HB 5548 calls for MI energy providers to reach a Renewable Energy Portfolio standard of 10% by 2015. An RPS is a great idea for the state of MI. The MSSC position on the matter is that 10% 2015 by 2015 is too small a goal for a state like MI. Five of the Eight Great Lakes States have already passed RPS legislation. Three of which, IL NY and MN all call for an RPS of 25%. We are the Great Lakes State and it seems ludicrous to us that we should be left wading in the wakes of the other states as they cruise past us on energy legislation. We now not only have to catch up but should beat or at least meet the 25% of other GL states in order to maintain our position as the Greatest Great Lakes State.

Section 5 (2) sub. sec. (b) of HB 5548 indicates that our energy providers can satisfy the requirements for the RPS through purchasing programs with renewable energy systems in

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neighboring states and provinces. While this still allows us the benefit of alternative energies, if we truly want our home economy to grow with new and innovative technological industries, then the energy, or at least the majority of it, should have to be produced in MI. We are MI, we want MI to do it, we want green jobs here not in WI or IL OH ON or MAN we need jobs for MI workers and graduating college seniors like myself.

Section 9 of HB 5549 addresses the issue of where the energy is to come from to some degree, as it is in 9(1) if a provider cannot comply with the RPS from their own sources they can enter into renewable energy contracts, 9(2) goes on to say that if they still cannot comply with the RPS, then they should buy energy from sources within the state. The MSSC feels that HB 5549 should stipulate that energy providers should first look to our own state for sources of energy to comply with the RPS, and then if there are no options within MI for the energy provider, they may enter into contracts with neighboring states and provinces.

Another point on which we the MSSC feel very strongly about is the need for a moratorium on new/expansions to coal fired power plants. Coal is dirty and harmful to our health from extraction to transportation to burning. Even the so called "clean coal" technologies are socially, environmentally, and technologically irresponsible when compared to relatively environmentally benign wind turbines and other renewable energy sources. Strong energy legislation would work to show the world that MI is taking a groundbreaking stance against climate change. By setting precedents instead of lagging behind the rest of the nation/world we would again be seen as forerunners of technology and innovation, like the days of Henry Ford. It would also provide a promise to MI residents both present and future, that their government cares about their health, safety and economic stability and will continue to do so for generations.

Here are the details of the MSSC state energy platform:

We want;

**1** A renewable energy portfolio standard (RPS) of at least 25% by 2025. Instead of the 10% by 2015 outlined in HB 5548.

**2** An energy efficiency (EE) standard requiring 2% energy efficiency increases in this state by the year 2015, with a commitment to the renegotiation of a stronger standard after 2015. Instead of the scaled 1% by 2012 outlined in HB 5525.

**3** Integrated Resource Planning (IRP). Include principles of IRP into HB 5525, HB 5530, HB 5548, HB 5549 and all future energy legislation.

**4 No new coal-fired power plants in Michigan!!!** Coal technology is archaic, filthy, and stagnant. Include this mandate in this round of energy legislation; we must act now to prevent the 7 proposed plants and expansions.

We students are the future of Michigan, and we hope and trust that you will take to heart our petition as you consider the energy legislation before your committee. If you have further questions please feel free to contact Michael P. Collins at (269) 274-1444 or via e-mail: [colli297@msu.edu](mailto:colli297@msu.edu).